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## THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY CHAPLAIN IN PRESERVING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

### РОЛЬ ВІЙСЬКОВОГО КАПЕЛАНА У ЗБЕРЕЖЕННІ ПСИХІЧНОГО ЗДОРОВ'Я ВІЙСЬКОВОСЛУЖБОВЦІВ

*The article deals with the military chaplains involvement in the process of psychological support of military personnel professional activity, examines the views of psychologists on the relevance of applying the religious faith potential in the context of maintaining the individual mental health.*

*The article deals with the results of an empirical research of the relevance of the involvement of military chaplains in the process of preserving the mental health of servicemen. The main results of the research are outlined, which were obtained using the following psychological methods of scientific cognition: observation, conversation, questionnaire and generalization of independent characteristics, etc. The results of the survey of respondents (servicemen of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine) were presented. Among the servicemen, a total of 130 respondents (82 men and 48 women), representatives of all regions of our country were interviewed. The category of believers included 75% of respondents (98 people), 85% (110 people) were the vast majority of Orthodox.*

*Particularly interesting are the results obtained on the question: 'In case of problems with the moral and psychological state, who would you rather turn to for advice?', where 50% of respondents indicated the commander of the unit, 21% of respondents indicated the psychologist of the military unit, 9% of respondents indicated the military chaplain, 5% of respondents indicated the civilian psychologist, which indicates the formation of the psychological culture of servicemen and the availability of a request for the work of military chaplains in the issue of providing psychological assistance to soldiers.*

*The prospect of further scientific research may be the research and generalization of the practical experience of military chaplains offering psychological support to servicemen in the combat zone.*

**Key words:** military chaplain, empirical research, military personnel, military psychologist, mental health.

*У статті актуалізується питання залучення військових капеланів до процесу психологічного супроводу професійної діяльності військовослужбовців, розглянуто погляди науковців-психологів щодо актуальності застосування потенціалу релігійної віри в контексті збереження психічного здоров'я особистості. Висвітлено результати емпіричного дослідження питання актуальності залучення військових капеланів до процесу збереження психічного здоров'я військовослужбовців. Окреслено основні результати дослідження, що були отримані за допомогою наступних психологічних методів наукового пізнання: спостереження, бесіда, анкетування, узагальнення незалежних характеристик тощо. Подано результати проведеного анкетування респондентів (військовослужбовців Державної прикордонної служби України). Серед військовослужбовців загалом було опитано 130 респондентів (82 чоловіка і 48 жінок), представників усіх регіонів нашої країни. До категорії віруючих себе віднесли 75% респондентів (98 осіб), переважна більшість православні 85% (110 осіб).*

*Особливо цікавими є результати отримані на запитання – «У разі виникнення проблем з морально-психологічним станом до кого б Ви скоріше звернулись за порадою?», де – 50% респондентів зазначили командира підрозділу, 21% – психолога військової частини, 9% – військового капелана, 5% – цивільного психолога, що свідчить про формування психологічної культури військовослужбовців та наявність запиту на роботу військових капеланів у питанні надання психологічної допомоги бійцям.*

*Перспективою подальших наукових розвідок може бути вивчення та узагальнення практичного досвіду військових капеланів під час надання психологічної допомоги військовослужбовцям у зоні ведення бойових дій.*

**Ключові слова:** військовий капелан, емпіричне дослідження, військовослужбовці, військовий психолог, психічне здоров'я.

**Statement of the problem.** Significant losses have been experienced by the civilian population in general and the military in particular as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. But in addition to physical trauma, many people also suffer from mental trauma, which over time can result in mental and/or psychosomatic problems. Today it is advisable to pay attention to how religious institutions are progressing when it comes to helping believers with their psychological needs. After all, military chaplains serving in the military formations of the components of the security and defense sector of Ukraine can provide significant assistance to military psychologists in preserving the mental health of servicemen.

**Analysis of recent research and published papers.** Historically, the initiative in the development of the problem of mental health belongs to prominent Western psychologists, namely: A. Adler, G. Eysenck, E. Erickson, R. Kettel, A. Maslow, G. Allport, C. Rogers, B. Skinner, Z. Freud, E. Frome, K.-G. Jung and others. A significant contribution to the research of this issue was made by domestic scientists, namely: G. Ball, N. Bastun, S. Boltivets, I. Haletska, N. Zhyhailo, M. Zhukova, O. Zavorodnia, V. Zlivkov, N. Kolotii, S. Kopylov, N. Kostruba, I. Kotsan, G. Lozhkin, O. Mateiuk, S. Maksymenko, V. Moskalets, M. Mushkevych, O. Noskova, Ye. Potapchuk, M. Savchyn, R. Sirko, I. Tolkunov and others. At the same time, the issue of involving military chaplains in the process of preserving the mental health of fighters requires a more detailed study.

**The purpose of the article** deals with highlighting the results of empirical research on the relevance of the involvement of military chaplains in the process of preserving the mental health of servicemen.

**Presentation of the main material.** Military psychologists note that in the conditions of today's war, which is a combination of classical methods of military operations with guerrilla actions, terrorism, information and cyberwarfare and is aimed at achieving suddenness, interception of initiative and gaining a psychological advantage, considerable attention should be paid to increasing the level of stress resistance and adaptive capacity of servicemen, preserving and restoring their mental health [2, P. 90].

The theoretical analysis of this problem, their own experience and observation of the professional activities of military chaplains in the units of protection of

the state border in the areas of warfare, allowed us to develop a program of our empirical research, namely: to determine the purpose, objectives and main phases of the research; to choose appropriate and valid techniques and methods of empirical research.

The solution of the research tasks was carried out sequentially and consisted of several phases. To clarify the problem under research in the first (initial) phase, a theoretical analysis of scientific works in the psychological field was carried out. This analysis gave us the chance to learn more about the phenomena we were researching and to pinpoint areas that needed extra care when the research program was put into practice. Systematization of data obtained as a result of the research of theoretical sources led to the conclusion that the research tasks will be solved through the use of various scientific methods used in psychology.

In the second phase of the research, an appropriate 'set' of psychodiagnostics techniques was formed. Empirical research methods, observations, conversations, questionnaires, generalizations of independent characteristics, etc. were used.

*'Observation is the most direct way to obtain experimental data, and this is its exceptional value as a method of scientific knowledge,'* S. Maksymenko rightly noted. [6, P. 27].

In this work, the observation was carried out personally by the authors. To obtain objective and reliable information, selective observation was used. The objects of observation were military chaplains of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine. The results of the observation were compared with the data of other research methods, at the same time it was taken into account that they are only an element in the general system of psychological information.

The conversation is considered quite common for psychology empirical methods of studying human behaviour, since in other natural sciences communication, in the strict sense of the word, between the subject and the object of research is impossible [5, P. 257]. Individual interviews were conducted by the authors personally and were informal (carried out according to a flexible scheme that allows you to ask questions sequentially, taking into account the circumstances that have developed). The participants of the interviews were servicemen of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine.

In general, a conversation was held with 34 officers who are subordinate to the personnel. There are 31 men and 3 women on gender. According to the age limit, the overwhelming majority of the interviewed servicemen are persons at age of 35 to 40 (25 people, which is 74%). Among the respondents, 27 people (80%) have a total length of military service of 16 years or more; 7 people took an active part in hostilities. During this research, the conversation as an empirical method of obtaining information through language communication was used to obtain from officers' actual data on the level of involvement of military chaplains in the process of preserving the mental health of servicemen; clarification of the conclusions and results of the research obtained by other scientific methods.

During the empirical research with the method of questioning (conversation), the method of generalizing independent characteristics was used. Its essence was to actively collect, analyse and summarize relevant information on the professional activities of military chaplains, primarily on participation in measures to preserve the mental health of servicemen.

The questionnaire, as one of the most common methods of written survey, made it possible to cover a large number of respondents in a short time, it was carried out according to a pre-developed plan and was characterized by the homogeneity of questions that were asked to a large group of people to obtain quantitative material about facts of interest to the research. The questionnaire was used to research the opinions, attitudes, views and proposals of various categories of servicemen. The survey involved soldiers who perform military service in the military units of the Western and Southern regional departments of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine. The questions in the questionnaire were closed (the choice of the answer from several options offered in the questionnaire) and open (the opportunity to provide your answer) forms. The answers were anonymous. Among the servicemen, a total of 130 respondents (82 men and 48 women), representatives of all regions of our country were interviewed.

According to the results of the survey, the data obtained were analysed, generalized and systematized, compared with the data of other empirical methods, and significantly supplemented and refined them. The questionnaires were processed using standard methods of mathematical statistics. The author's questionnaire was developed taking into account the following research [1; 2]. The questionnaire form contained 10 questions, both closed and open, and the answers were anonymous. Based on the results of the

questionnaire processing, the following information was received:

The category of believers included 75% of respondents (98 people), 85% (110 people) of the vast majority of Orthodox.

Interestingly, answering the question: *'Is religion necessary for a modern serviceman in a war?'*, 51% of respondents gave an affirmative answer, 8% gave a negative answer, and the rest (40%) could not determine this question. The actualization of this issue is because, during the existence of the Soviet Union, an anti-religious campaign was actively conducted, the purpose of which was to limit the influence of religion on public life. This campaign actively influenced the parents and grandparents of the respondents. It is crucial to know whether religion has gained back lost ground in terms of family and personal religiosity. In the context of checking this statement, the next question of the questionnaire was the following: *'Assess the level of religiosity of your circle of communication'*, 11% of servicemen noted it as high; the average level of religiosity of their circle of communication was noted 55% of fighters; the low level was noted in 32% of respondents.

Dealing with the question: *'Does religiosity positively affect the moral and psychological state of a serviceman?'* 104 people (80%) gave an affirmative answer. Only 4% of respondents expressed a negative attitude to the introduction of the military chaplaincy institute, even though there were 18% of people identified themselves as atheists.

Also interesting for this research are the results of our 2021 research among the personnel of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the generalization of which shows that 62% of respondents consider the activities of military chaplains in the army necessary and expedient [4]. During this research, 46% of respondents are positive about the introduction of the Military Chaplaincy Service in military units, and only 4% are negative.

In addition, it is necessary to take into account the fact that, according to the researchers, in extreme and combat conditions, the religiosity of servicemen is increasing. This is evidenced by surveys conducted in units performing combat missions [3; 7; 9].

As it was rightly noted in the work of M. Halichenko and N. Boiko, important indicators of the religiosity of persons are attendance at worship services and reading religious literature. They make it possible to understand the importance of religious practices in their lives [2, P. 22]. According to the results of our survey, 63% of respondents attend worship services only on major holidays, 4% of respondents

attend regularly (at least once a month), and 33% of respondents do not attend at all.

As for reading religious literature, 66% of respondents said that they do not read such literature at all, 32% of respondents read sometimes, and 1.5% of the respondents regularly read only. Particularly interesting are the results obtained on the question: 'In case of problems with the moral and psychological state, who would you rather turn to for advice?', where 50% of respondents indicated the commander of the unit, 21% the psychologist of the military unit, 9% the military chaplain, 5% the civilian psychologist, which indicates the formation of the psychological culture of servicemen and the availability of a request for the work of military chaplains in the issue of providing psychological assistance to soldiers.

**Conclusions.** Consequently, our research once again attested that the religiosity of the servicemen involved in the research mainly has external forms

and is not supported by participation in religious rites, visits to religious buildings, or reading religious literature, taking into account the most recent psychological works [1; 7]. But despite this, the question: 'Is there a need to involve military chaplains in the process of providing psychological assistance to a serviceman?' 60% of respondents gave an affirmative answer. Thus, the active participation of military chaplains and psychologists in the process of offering psychological support to combatants will have a positive effect on the preservation of their mental health and will help with the implementation of the All-Ukrainian Mental Health Program.

The prospect of further scientific research may be the research and generalization of the practical experience of military chaplains offering psychological support to servicemen in the combat zone.

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